



## Cultural Negotiation through Food Case study: Chinese Soft Diplomacy in Indonesia

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### Abstract

Food is one of the common ways for one culture to penetrate another culture through migrants. Chinese migrants in Indonesia have introduced their food culture to Indonesians for some centuries and now Indonesians might find it difficult to recognize whether they are now local, fusion or Chinese food. The acceptance of Chinese food in Indonesia serves an example on how soft diplomacy and culture negotiation has completely succeeded. Chinese food has already blended with Indonesian culture and Indonesians nowadays are acquainted with. This study will use literature as main resources. Historical and anthropological approach will be used in analyzing the data. This paper tries to focus on three main issues, which are the history of Chinese migration in Indonesia, the history and acculturation of Chinese food in Indonesia and culture negotiation through food. In conclusion, the acceptance of Chinese food in Indonesia culture is part of the success of soft diplomacy and culture negotiation between Chinese migrants and Indonesian leads to the permission of other form of diplomacy.

**Keywords:** *Chinese, cultural negotiation, soft diplomacy, food*

### Introduction

Indonesia is known for its diverse traditional foods. Each and every region in Indonesia has their own traditional food with particular taste and made of different spices. However, many Indonesians are not aware of their traditional food. They rather take it for granted, not interested to

thing and ask about the history of their daily meals. Moreover, some Indonesians hold wrong claims on what they regard as their 'traditional' foods. For example, many, if not most, believe that nasi goreng (fried rice), which now can be found almost everywhere in the world, is a native dish to Indonesia. In fact, if we look deeper into the history and migration in Indonesia, nasi goreng is originally a Chinese dish, which was introduced to the country by the Chinese migrants.

This paper is aiming to broaden horizons about the culture negotiation on food, which is part of soft diplomacy that migrants mostly used in their destination country. This phenomenon also can be seen in Indonesia, especially in Jakarta, where many Chinese migrants came and formed diaspora community. Studies on food, especially in relation to migration and culture, are still rare in Indonesia. Therefore, this paper is hope to be able to enrich those studies with new knowledge. However, this study has limitation since it only recognizes Chinese as one single homogenous ethnic group, while in fact Chinese consists of heterogeneous ethnic groups. In addition, this paper also generalizes Chinese food as one single entity while indeed Chinese food has many varieties. This can be analyzed more comprehensively in the future study.

This study will use literature as the main resource. Historical and anthropological approach will be used to analyze the data. This paper attempts to focus on three mains issues, namely the history of Chinese migration in Indonesia, the history and acculturation of Chinese food and cultural negotiation through food. Rather than examining the authenticity of food, this study will bring to light the process of cultural negotiation in relation to food. While serving as object of enjoymen, food can also be seen as cultural battlefield. The culture negotiation between migrants and local will be the focus in this paper.

### **The History of Chinese Migration in Indonesia**

Lim and Mead, (2011: 6-7) state that the Chinese came to Indonesia in several waves. It is not clear when precisely their first migration to Indonesia started but in the fourth century some evidences, such as relics, artifacts and tombstones, have found in certain areas in Indonesia. In addition, Lim and Mead (2011: 6-7) claim that there is a tombstone in West Java inscribed with Hokkien characters before Dutch arrived in Batavia. Sugianto (2002) claims that the Chinese migrated to Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia, after the fall of Ming Dynasty. Moreover, he (Sugianto, 2002) adds that in the 15th century, during the glorious period of Ming Dynasty, they undertook seven expeditions all over the world. One of the expeditions was led by Sam Po, who is known as Admiral Ceng

Ho, arrived in Palembang, South Sumatra, Indonesia. The admiral Ceng Ho brought in Islamic teaching to Indonesia. He also brought a large number of Chinese, mostly Yunnan Moslems, to work and teach people on Islam. Later on, he built first Chinese Moslem community in Indonesia.

Although the Chinese have already visited and developed some kind of connection with Indonesia, particularly in business, in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century but the actual migration has not occurred until the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. This first large group of Chinese immigrants was mostly male and then married local women, lived in the big cities close to the coastal areas in eastern Java, West Sumatra, and West Kalimantan. Moreover, most of them came from Hokkien (Fujian province) and worked as traders. Suryadinata (2004b:72) states that many Chinese from the first wave preferred to stay in Indonesia and never returned to China, although in their tradition, they have the obligation to come back to their homeland when they have already had enough money. Thus, the first wave of Chinese migrants in Indonesia created Chinese diaspora in Indonesia and assimilated to local customs rather than Chinese custom. In support, Arkandipto (2016) argues that the first wave's Chinese migrants mostly had been assimilated with local Indonesian. Most of them also lack of Chinese writing and speaking skill and lost connection with their family and relatives in China.

United States Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services, Indonesia (1999) claims that the next significant wave of Chinese immigrants in Indonesia occurred in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, most of whom came from Southern China and formed exclusively Chinese settlements in the Outer Islands of Indonesia (United States Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services, Indonesia, 1999). Suryadinata (2004b:75) states that in the late 18th century, the sea trade in South East Asia was controlled by Chinese and it means that the existence of Chinese in Indonesia was very important. They took on the role as middlemen between European and local people. In Dutch colonial era, they were known as Chukongs or Kapitan Cina and controlled vast areas of land, plantation, coal and gold mines, diamond and tin mines, and the likes. It is not surprising that Chinese in Dutch era has largely contributed to the then economy and thus they were known as the rich in Indonesia (—, 2003). Suryadinata (2004b:75) argues that that period was known as the century of Chinese, since they exercised a vital position in Southeast Asia, including Indonesia. Sugianto (2002) claims that during the Dutch occupation in Indonesia Chinese people were also involved in a number of social and political issues and yet their dominant

involvement was in the area of economy and trade activities. As their role as mediator, Chinese got some privileges from Dutch in the society. *Arkandipto* (2016) argues that Chinese privileges include self-governance in their quarters but the Dutch only allowed them to remain in urban cities and involve in trade, in order to restrain them from extensive contacts with the natives. Therefore most Chinese in Indonesia were either traders or urban citizens. The consequence of this can still be seen nowadays, where Chinese Indonesians are highly concentrated in big cities like Jakarta and Medan and it is very hard to find Chinese Indonesians in rural areas.

According to Pepinsky (2012), who has collected data from 1930's census of Chinese in the colonial era found the top five cities with highest number of Chinese population:

No	District	Regency	Number of Inhabitants
1	Batavia	Batavia	47087
2	Soerabaia	Soerabaia	36866
3	Semarang	Semarang	274327
4	Weltevreden	Batavia	24601
5	Tangerang	Batavia	19734

Source: Pepinsky, 2012

The table above shows that Chinese in Indonesia mostly lived in urban areas, such as Batavia, which is now better known as Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia, Soerabaia or Surabaya, the capital of East Java, and Semarang, the capital of Central Java. They lived in urban area to make the distribution of their trading activities become faster and easier. Unfortunately, there is no single data that can illustrate the number and position of Chinese communities outside of Java. There was evidence of the large number of Chinese in Medan and Kalimantan but the statistic data remained unknown.

However, Vickers (2005:28) contends that when Dutch occupied Indonesia, they implemented power structure policy that divided people in Indonesia in three levels. The top level was Dutch and the bottom was native Indonesian, while Chinese was in intermediate position. In

support, United States Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services, Indonesia (1999) states that during Dutch colonial period in Indonesia, there were three levels of citizenship, where the first or highest level was for Westerners, including Dutch; second was for East Asian, Chinese was in this position; and third or the lowest level was local people or Indonesian. Based on this categorization, many Chinese did not want to get married with local women anymore, since mix marriage with people from lower position would degrade their status. The Chinese seemed to have enjoyed this position as mediators, which gave them great opportunities to expand their businesses. In contrast, Urban (2013) claims that Indonesian seemed unhappy with this policy and began to show the anti-Chinese sentiments.

Furthermore, there were different reasons that drove the Chinese to migrate to Indonesia. While the first wave migrant mostly were traders and moved to expand their trading distribution, the new wave motivations were mostly because of domestic political and economic situation in China (Lim and Mead, 2011: 6-7). In support, Arkandipto (2016) contends that during those times China was suffering from economic downturn. At the same time, British who were occupying Malaysia and the neighboring areas, including Kalimantan, were in a huge need for manpower to do land clearing. This demand contributed to the Chinese mass migration to parts of Indonesia. It is not surprising now that a large number of Chinese communities can be found in Kalimantan.

The new wave of Chinese migrants in Indonesia has different character from the previous one. In the first wave, most of the migrants came by themselves as traders. While in the late wave, the Chinese migrants came with their families. In addition, most of them still maintained their relation with their family and relatives in Mainland China and preserved their culture and tradition. However, Suryadinata (2004b:76) argues that the most significant things between the old and new wave of migrants is Chinese in the first wave did not have to choose citizenship, while after the Dutch occupied Indonesia, they have to choose the citizenship, to become Chinese or become local citizen. As a result, most of them, particularly in the second generation of Chinese, prefer to be Indonesia citizen.

There are generally two groups of ethnic Chinese in Indonesia, though they are not as easily distinguishable from each other as they once were. United States Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services, Indonesia (1999) explains that there are Peranakan and Totok in Chinese community in Indonesia. The *peranakan* refers to Chinese second generation who was born in Indonesia, mostly are Christian, although

there are small number of Moslem. While, Totok refers to Chinese from new waves who originally and born in China, even they were born in Indonesia, both of their parents are full-blooded Chinese. Totok still preserve their Chinese customs and traditions, such as celebrating Chinese New year, etc. In addition, Totok also still teach their children and grandchildren to speak and write in Chinese in order to keep their identity as pure Chinese (United States Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services, Indonesia, 1999).

The Chinese make up the population of Indonesia. In 1998, Iritani (1998) claims that the number of Chinese in Indonesia was around three percent of total population and widely spread in all regions. Moreover, she (Iritani 1998) argues that more than eight million Chinese in Indonesia came from Southern China and controlled more than two-thirds of the total Indonesian economy. However, after the fall of Soeharto in May 1998<sup>1</sup> and the riot that targetted the Chinese as the peak of anti-Chinese sentiments, a great number of Chinese in Indonesia fled to Singapore, Malaysia and other countries (Iritani, 1998). Although many Chinese have fled from Indonesia after May 1998, Suryadinata (2004b) claims that the number of Chinese in Indonesia in 2000 was still around two percent of the total population. Furthermore, in 2008, the Overseas Compatriot Affairs Commission of the Republic of China in Taiwan contends that there are 7,566,000 Chinese in Indonesia, which is considerably high.

### **The history and the Acculturation of Chinese Food**

Migration is not merely a move of people, but also their culture and tradition. One of the most significant things the Chinese brought was their food culture. Chinese began to influence Indonesia dishes since 2000BC trough the introduction of tea, noodles, soybean and the method of stir fry cooking (—, 2001). Tan (2002:156) states that Chinese food, cooking utensils and cutlery have been penetrating to local culture since their first arrival in Indonesia. Noodles, bean sprout, Chinese cabbage, tauco (soya bean paste), and tofu are some of Chinese food ingredients that can be easily met in Indonesia today. Furthermore, Tan (2002:158) argues that Chinese foods in Indonesia were mostly of Hokkien's influence, the largest Chinese ethnic group in Indonesia. In support, Leo (1975:3-8) argues that most Chinese brought their traditional dishes, such as bakmi, noodles that can be cook with soup or fried with any kind of meat; kwetiau, rice noodles; bihun, Chinese vermicelli; bakso, meat balls; juhi, cuttle fish; cumi, small cuttlefish; lobak, radish or turnip; tim, to

steam, as in nasi tim Hainan/Hainan chicken rice; capcai, the local name for 'chop suey', a mix of stir fry vegetables; and etc.

According to Kelly (2016), Chinese also brought their eat culture. Moreover, they usually have three times meal a day, which is breakfast, lunch and dinner. At breakfast, they usually eat soya-bean milk, deep-fried dough sticks (cakwe), porridge, steamed stuffed buns or rice noodles, while at lunch noodles or rice, plus some meat and vegetables are very common. Dinner has become **the most important meal** for many Chinese. The dishes usually include soup, a variety of meats and vegetables, and rice. In addition, they also consume many varieties of fruit.

Like Indonesian, Chinese eat rice as their daily and staple food, therefore it is easy for them to adjust to Indonesia food culture. Besides, they also consume vegetables and meats that are easy to find in Indonesia. Lertchavalitsakul (2015:141) claims that most migrants and diaspora are craving the taste of homeland that they adopt in their food habits. Moreover, Lertchavalitsakul (2015:144) states that the attachment to food, by smell and taste of particular items has led to create the sense of belonging and diasporic memory for their identity fulfillment. It is not surprising that Chinese in Indonesia also still maintain their ancestor recipes in their menu to preserve and fulfill their craving for homeland taste.

Lertchavalitsakul (2015:147) argues that food becomes the vehicle for migrants to maintain a sense of ethnic continuity and integrity which at the same time it also can be seen as a form of cultural and ethnic identification. Moreover, Lertchavalitsakul (2015:144) claims that the migrants' ability to choose their traditional food means that the cultural politics of taste is a core facet of food culture and represents an everyday politics that allow them to be choosy in particular situation. Lertchavalitsakul (2015:149) adds that food can become a battlefield in which power relationship is differentiated through taste, exercising a role in this multi-cultural and diverse ethnic society. As result, the Chinese in Indonesia also experienced battle when they tried to preserve their traditional recipes on food, therefore acculturation between Chinese and Indonesian food could not be avoided.

In general, Chinese food can be divided in eight categories based on their province of origin in China, namely Shandong dishes, Hunan dishes, Guangdong or Kuangtung or Kanton dishes, Fujian or Hokkien dishes (the origin of the most Chinese in Indonesia), Zhejiang dishes, Jiangsu dishes, Anhui dishes, and Sichuan dishes (---, 2015a). In addition, besides the variety in the Chinese food, there is significant difference between Chinese Peranakan and Chinese Totok cooking in Indonesia. In



regards to the existence of Chinese Peranakan and Chinese Totok in Indonesia, Lim and Mead (2011:9) argue that the Chinese Peranakan usually combine their food with the local food (use coconut milk and local spices, such as turmeric) that produce Chinese food with local flavor. Chinese Totok, on the other hand, usually cook use traditional spices, such as Chinese five flavours/ ngohiong and stir fried vegetables.

The Chinese Peranakan style of cooking can be easily found in the Indonesian daily meals, such as nasi goreng (fried rice), mi goreng (fried noodle), bihun goreng (fried vermicelli), kwetiau (fried rice strip), lumpia (springroll), siomay (steamed fish cake) and bakpia (sweet roll filled with mung beans). In addition, Chinese migrants especially in Jakarta also influenced the Betawi dishes such as asinan (pickled vegetables and fruits) and rujak juhi (vegetable salad with salted cuttlefish). Those kinds of food can be recognized as Indonesian food nowadays, although their origin was from China.

Another dish that shows the influence of Chinese culture is nasi goreng (fried rice). Nasi goreng is a very famous dish in Indonesia and widely known as local dish nowadays. Nasi goreng can be found very easily all around Indonesia, from street seller to high level restaurant. Nasi goreng has already been present in Indonesia since 4000 BC, brought by Chinese migrants (—, 2015a). There are many variations of nasi goreng, however nasi goreng in Java are commonly use sweet soy sauce, while in other place soy sauce might be replaced by other spices. The recipe of nasi goreng came from the Chinese practice for not throwing their leftover away (—, 2015a). Therefore, they cook the leftover food, such as rice, meat and vegetables to be eaten again for the next meal time. The ingredients of nasi goreng can be different depends on the leftover food in the house. However, there are basic ingredients in nasi goreng, consisting of rice and egg. The egg can be cook as omelet, scramble or sunny side egg. Today, there are many variation of nasi goreng in Indonesia, including salted fish nasi goreng, shrimp paste nasi goreng, nasi goreng seafood, nasi goreng with chicken liver, etc (—, 2015a).

Another Chinese dish that has been adopted by Indonesian is kwetiau (rice strip). Like nasi goreng, kwetiau also can be found everywhere especially at night time. There are many street sellers that sell kwetiau.

Kwetiau is a kind of noodle made from rice, can be cook by frying or boiling. Kwetiau came from Cantonese words koe and tiau that means rice cake strips (—, 2015a). The same as nasi goreng, kwetiau also varies, such as Hokkian kwetiau that uses fish meatball, duck egg and seafood, and Tio Ciu Kwetiau uses beef meat as the main ingredient. The highlight



of Indonesian kwetiau is its sweet taste thanks to the use of soy sauce and only halal ingredients for the market in Indonesia (—, 2015a).

Beside that, there is also porridge as one of Chinese food assimilation. Wu (2002:61) states that historically, porridge has been used as everything from a ceremonial food, to a nutritious sustenance given to people with poor health condition. At the same time, Tan (2002:161) argues that throughout Chinese history, to all people, from the royal family to the common people, porridge has been served not only as food, but as a tonic as well. It has the ability to strengthen as well as prolong life. It is also good for healthy digestion and absorption of nutrition. The benefits of eating porridge are indubitable. There are many variety of porridge in Indonesia. In Yogyakarta, sweet porridge (rice porridge with sugar cane) is commonly used in every ceremonial occasion. People there also eat porridge with Gudeg (Yogyakarta traditional food), while in West Java and Jakarta, bubur ayam (chicken rice porridge) is famous for breakfast. Bubur ayam can be found in every corner of Jakarta in the morning, served by street hawkers.

Reciprocally, Chinese cuisine was also influenced by Indonesian local dishes, such as lontong Cap Go Meh that is usually served in the end of Imlek (Chinese New year) or 15 days after the Chinese New year celebration. Josh Chen (2006) in his article states that in the early arrival of Chinese migrants in Java, many of them married with local women and generated Javanese-Chinese, which is locally called as Chinese Peranakan as set out above. They became accustomed to their wives' food culture. One of the examples is that they replaced the tradition to eat yuan xiao (glutinous rice ball) with lontong (rice cake), Javanese dishes opor ayam (braised chicken in coconut milk), sayur labu siam (chayote vegetable soup) and sambal goreng hati (spicy beef liver). Moreover, Chen (2006) contends that the Chinese Peranakans believe that Lontong Cap Go Meh symbolizes good fortune. However, Lontong Cap Go Meh is only popular among Chinese Peranakan communities in Java, while Chinese Peranakans in other island are not familiar with it.

Beside Lontong Cap Go Meh, Chinese food that has been assimilated with Indonesian food is bakmi. As widely known, bakmie consists of two words, bak and mie. Bak refers to pork meat and mie refers to noodle (Tan, 2002:158). In their first arrival, bakmie literally means pork noodle. However, since most of Indonesians were Muslims and eat no pork, then they replaced it with another halal meat which everyone can consume, such as beef and chicken. Today, bakmie is one of the common dishes in Indonesia that can be found almost everywhere. Bakmie ayam (noddles with chicken) is a very popular dish during the day, while bakmie

goreng (fried noodle) is a common dish in the evening. The making of bakmie itself varies. Some use egg and the other don't. Egg noodle is the most common in Indonesia. In the Chinese tradition, mie or noodle symbolizes long life, which is usually served in birthday parties or other annual celebrations (Tan, 2002:159). However, over the course of the time, acculturation continued to occur and many Indonesians eat noodle anytime they want without necessarily understanding its symbolic meaning. The addition of local spices to such dishes only makes it harder to recognize the originality of the dishes, as they have become different from the original one. Mie Aceh (Aceh noodle), for instance, is one of noodle-based cookings with extensive use of the local spices in Aceh. The taste is very different from Chinese mie but the basic of mie making remains the same.

Although, Chinese foods become very familiar for Indonesian daily menu. Today, many Indonesian, especially young generation do not recognize that some of their daily food are brought by Chinese and not originally from Indonesia. A, one of the teenagers in West Java believe that nasi goreng is one of Indonesian traditional food. The same thought also came from A's mother. In addition, the origin of nasi goreng has been a subject of debates overseas as well, particularly in Southeast Asian countries, such as Singapore and Malaysia who share similar culture is similar and are closely related. The Strait Times (Kok, 2016) featured debates after Rio Ferdinand, an English and Manchester United football player, posted a photo of him with nasi goreng and wrote that it is Singaporean local dish. None of the readers commented that the origin of nasi goreng was from China, most of them stated that nasi goreng was common dish in Southeast Asia without recognize its origin.

### **Culture Negotiation through Food**

The narration above shows conclusively that Chinese culture, particularly food, has penetrated and become part of the food consumption in general Indonesian. Douglas (1997) in Lertchavalitsakul (2015:150) argues that food is a form of communication, one which reveals the social interrelations that occur between peoples from different group and ethnicities. Lertchavalitsakul (2015:151) claims that the differentiation between migrant food and local food can be seen as a form of power relations within cultural politics, in which the taste of food does matter in particular situation and on several levels. At the same time, Rosales (2015) argues that food is an important part of identity and a powerful class marker, as well as an excellent tool for solidarity. However, it is also fluid and flexible when it comes to the space of inclusion of one

cuisine in relation to another. It means that Chinese culture might have taken longer time to be accepted, but food became the key, which is easier and faster to be introduced in the host countries.

According to A's mother, in her childhood era, Chinese food was very prestigious since the food only can be accessed by middle-up class and were only served in Chinese restaurants. I argue that it is related to the continuing position of Chinese in the Dutch colonial era. Chinese food seemed to hold a higher position than Indonesian traditional food and only can be accessed by limited groups of people. In addition, Chinese in Indonesia are well known as good chefs. According to A's mother, old generation of Indonesians believe that Chinese food taste was better than Indonesian food.

Based on the explanation above, it is obvious that food become a battlefield for power and culture negotiation. As mentioned above, the first wave of Chinese migrants seemed to be more flexible and receptive to the local culture than the migrants of the later wave. As it is aforementioned, most of the first wave migrants married with local women and they managed to adopt completely Indonesian culture, that can be seen in their incapability to trace their original recipe, such as Lontong Cap Go Meh. This kind of dish is only popular among Chinese Javanese communities, and remains unknown to those in other places. From the first wave, Chinese experienced cultural assimilation to Indonesian culture, particularly in terms of food. Culture assimilation means people adopt the new culture and give up their original features (~, 2015b).

Berry (1997:7) contends that there are several types of culture acculturation, namely reactive, creative and delayed. Reactive can appear as part of resistance from both cultures, while creative results in a new form of culture that could not be found in both cultures. Delayed, on the other hand, witnesses cultural changes from both parties but after quite some time. Based on Berry's explanation, the integration of the Chinese culture into Indonesian is delayed type.

Furthermore, Berry (1997:9) claims that all of immigrants in the world must be struggling with cultural acculturation issues, including cultural maintenance and contact and participation. Cultural maintenance defines on to what extent the migrants maintain their tradition and culture while contact and participation defines to what extent the migrants should get involved and integrated into the host culture. This applies to the Chinese migrants in Indonesia whereby they had to maintain their tradition and integrate with Indonesian culture simultaneously. Evidently the latest wave of Chinese migrants in

Indonesia still maintained their connection and kept their tradition, including cooking and food. They also taught about fusion food, which means many Indonesian adopt Chinese food with some local touch, like in nasi goreng, kwetiau, bubur ayam, etc. The migration of this wave shows that culture acculturation occurred, in the form the transfer of values and customs from Chinese to local Indonesian and vice versa (~, 2015b).

In the context of Chinese migrants in Indonesia, which has been a predominantly Muslim country, Baron (2003) claims that immigrants from Chinese who were mostly non-Muslim experienced uncertainty and ambiguity due to religion differences. As consequence, most of Chinese have to negotiate and establish relationship and trust with Indonesian people before they can get well-integrated into the community. According to Baron (2003), their being persistent and determined as their common characteristics allows them to easily negotiate in terms of culture, which is pivotal when it comes to transnational migration context and soft diplomacy strategy.

Lee and Gomez (2011) argue that soft power is explained as “the capacity to persuade or attract others to do what one wants through the force of ideas, knowledge and values”. In regard to the use of food as a tool to create transnational relationship and understanding, Chapple-Sokol (2013:164) called it as culinary diplomacy. At the same time, Costas Constantinou in Chapple-Sokol (2013:166) claims that the use of food as potential tool of diplomacy is also considered as gastronomic diplomacy. Furthermore, he (Chapple-Sokol 2013:167) argues that the use of food and drinks for new form of diplomacy can raise higher language competency that can be more effective than the verbal language.

The use of soft diplomacy, including culinary or gastronomic diplomacy, leads to cultural diplomacy. The use of food, which is part of daily life, can infiltrate easily within public sphere than any other forms of diplomacy. Nicholas Cull in Chapple-Sokol (2013:168) contends that, “Cultural diplomacy is an actor’s attempt to manage the international environment through making its cultural resources and achievements known overseas and/or facilitating cultural negotiation abroad”. Moreover, he argues that the strength of cultural diplomacy is that it allows acceptance by foreigners more smoothly, as well as by population abroad. Having said that, Nye in Chapple-Sokol (2013:168) believes that food is one perfect example of a nation’s soft power. He claims that food is the best diplomacy tool that can be easily and universally accepted. In support, Barthes in Chapple-Sokol (2013:172) states that, “food is a

system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations and behavior”.

Reynolds (2012) in her book titled “the Soft Power of Food: A diplomacy of hamburger and Sushi?” argues that soft diplomacy leads to cultural negotiation, where migrants penetrate their ideologies or culture to other communities. In the context of food, he contends that food as tool in the cultural negotiation has two stages: first is the introduction of ‘new’ culture and second is the food consumption by local people in general (Reynolds, 2012:50). Moreover, Reynolds (2012:50) states that cultural negotiations will take three stages, which is blend with the local, creating trust and got familiarised with local that means the soft diplomacy has accepted. In support, Cull’s idea on cultural negotiation claims that the process of familiarization becomes the key to the success in cultural diplomacy (Chapple-Sokol, 2013:169).

In this case, it is obvious that the soft diplomacy the Chinese migrants launched through food was a big success. Today, many Indonesians could no longer recognize that their daily meals are originally from China. They consume them on daily basis and claim that they are Indonesian local food. As a result, when Indonesian people have become familiar with Chinese cuisine, the likelihood is higher for them to accept any other form of diplomacy, such as Chinese businesses and investments in Indonesia. Having said that, the success of Chinese cultural negotiation through food diplomacy has allowed both sides to mutually benefit, which in turn will strengthen the relationship between both countries.

## **Conclusion**

Every day we eat different kinds of food but rarely do we ask or think where they originally came from or whether it is authentic from one particular country or not. In Indonesia, varieties of food actually came from China brought by their migrants more than two centuries ago. Two waves of Chinese migration are significantly different. The first migrants were mostly men, came to Indonesia and married with local women. They have assimilated with local culture, blended and lost their original culture. As a result, most of them could no longer speak in Chinese, lost connection with their relatives in China and ate Indonesian foods on daily basis. On the other hand, the latest wave of Chinese migrants in Indonesia mostly brought their wives and family so they still maintained their original culture, including foods. They also experienced acculturation with local Indonesia, but they kept their connection with their relatives in China. Accordingly, most of them still speak Chinese because fluently as they use it with their relatives in mainland China. In

addition, most of them eat Chinese food with original recipes that they inherit from their ancestor. However, the food from both waves until now can be found in Indonesia and accepted as local food in Indonesia.

The acceptance of Chinese food in Indonesian culture is part of the success of soft diplomacy that Chinese migrant has introduced for more than two centuries. It also shows the process of cultural negotiation between migrants and local people. At first, they introduced their culture, blended with the locals, built trust and then got accepted comprehensively by Indonesian in general. The acceptance or familiarization of Chinese foods becomes the key of success in Chinese cultural diplomacy in Indonesia. This, in turn, also leads to the acceptance another form of diplomacy, such as Chinese businesses and investments in Indonesia. In general, the success of food diplomacy can lead to acceptance of migrants or country's interest, which is very beneficial for the future relation between both countries.

## **Endnotes**

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<sup>1</sup> The riots were triggered by economic crises that lead to food price rises, food shortages and mass unemployment. This condition has also worsening by the fall of Soeharto and New Order government. They May 1998 riots were incident of mass violence that happened in Indonesia, particularly in Medan (4-8 May), Jakarta (12-15 May) and Solo (13-15 May). The main targets of the violence were ethnic Chinese, however, most of the people who died in the riots were the Javanese Indonesian looters who targeted the Chinese shops, not the Chinese themselves, since the looters were burnt to death in a massive fire. The typical pattern of these riots is of a day-long outburst of violence confined to one town or a region. Usually property damage occurs but not killing. On the whole there is little evidence of coordination or planning. The anger appears to be directed at the 'haves' in town, with anti-Christian sentiment a kind of incidental overlay expressed through graffiti. Anti-Chinese racism within Indonesian society came to its most gruesome recent expression in the riots that shook Jakarta 1315 May 1998. Many hundreds of people died in these riots, the vast majority of them not Chinese but indigenous Indonesian young men trapped in burning supermarkets. Many of the businesses destroyed were owned, as everywhere else, by Chinese. The aspect that caused the most international outrage was credible reports of widespread rapes against ethnic Chinese women. Yet government ministers in August 1998 began to sound unanimous in their denial that any such rapes had occurred. (source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/May\\_1998\\_riots\\_of\\_Indonesia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/May_1998_riots_of_Indonesia) and <https://web.archive.org/web/20000920073842/http://www.serve.com/inside/digest/dig86.htm>)

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